

Response Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
Serial No. 10/726,631
Sughrue Ref: Q78608

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Riesenberg (US 4,674,785).

Claim 1

Reisenberg discloses a vacuum lifting arrangement for lifting flat pieces, such as lumber boards or lumber planks. The arrangement includes a housing 2 with receiving spaces 16 and a chamber 5. A vacuum generating device 17 (blower) is provided in one of the chambers 16 and communicates with the chamber 5 via a conduit 18. *See* Reisenberg at Fig. 1.

A valve plate 8 is provided below the housing 2. The valve plate 8 is subdivided into individual compartments 12 that are isolated from each other by valves 11. Each of the compartments 12 has a suction aperture 9 or individual suction cup 10. *See* Reisenberg at Fig. 1.

A suction opening 13, 34 is provided at a bottom of the chamber 5. A flap 19 opens and closes the suction opening 13. The flap 19 is raised and lowered by an actuating device 20. When the flap 19 is open, the area within the valve plate 8 is in communication with the vacuum of the first chamber 16. *See* Reisenberg at Fig. 3.

The other chamber 16 is provided with a first communication opening 14 and a second communication opening 15, 35. A flap 27 opens and closes the second communication opening 15. The flap 27 is raised and lowered by an actuating device 30. When the flap 27 is open, the area within the valve plate 8 is in communication with ambient air through pipes 25 and 26. *See* Reisenberg at Fig. 4.

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Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of independent claim 1 at least because Riesenberg does not teach all of the claim's recitations. For example, Riesenberg does not teach or suggest the claimed sheet feeder in which a sucker adheres to both plate shaped members and sheet materials and both the sucker and a suction fan operate at a position close to the sheet material.

The claimed invention allows the suction fan to provide adhering of the stacked plate shaped members and sheet materials when the fan is moved close to the stacked plate-shaped members and sheet materials. Thereafter, the sucker is brought into contact with the sheet material and the sucker adheres to the sheet material. The use of the suction fan before the sucker allows the sheet material, if it is at the top of the stack, to be separated from the plate-shaped member, thus preventing the sucker from adhering to both the sheet material and plate-shaped member

In contrast to the claimed invention, Riesenberg's workpiece 1 cannot correspond to both the plate-shaped member and sheet material, as set forth in claim 2. There is no disclosure in Riesenberg of a sheet feeder in which different types of elements are alternately removed by a sucker.

Moreover, Riesenberg's vacuum lifting arrangement only includes suction cups 10 that operate at a position close to the flat pieces. That is, the vacuum generating device 17 of Riesenberg does not operate at a position close to the flat piece, but instead is provided within a chamber 5 that is remote from the flat pieces.

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Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of independent claim 1 at least for the reasons discussed above.

Claim 2

Moreover, with respect to claim 2, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection at least because of its dependency from claim 1 and because Riesenbergs does not teach the claimed sheet feeder in which the suction fan is provided so as to face one end of the sheet material.

In contrast to the claimed invention, the vacuum generating device 17 of Riesenbergs is provided within the chamber 5 and cannot face the flat pieces.

Claim 3

Moreover, with respect to claim 3, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection at least because of its dependency from claim 1 and because Riesenbergs does not teach the claimed sheet feeder in which the suction fan is provided in the proximity of at least one of the suckers.

In contrast to the claimed invention, the vacuum generating device 17 of Riesenbergs is provided within the chamber 5 and is at a remote position with respect to the suction cups 10.

Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

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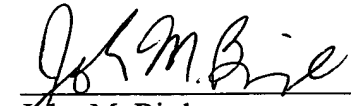
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